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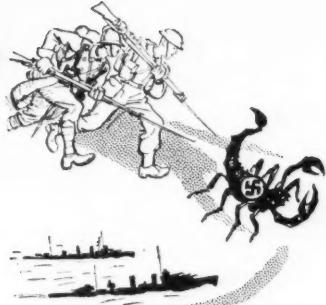
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PUNNY

OR

THE LONDON CHARIVARI



Vol. CXCVII No. 5141

October 18 1939

Charivaria

CHARLIE CHAPLIN is proceeding with his film based on Nazidom. By ingenious trick photography he will double all the HITLER parts.

Fire recently broke out in an office of the German Propaganda Ministry. The flames were extinguished, however, before any real good was done.



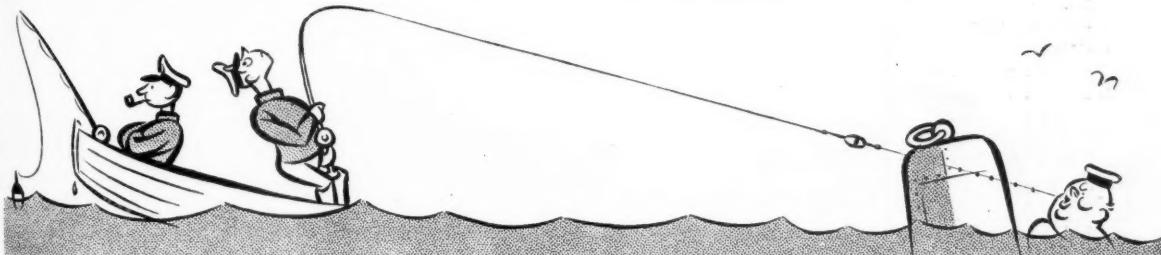
"Is Russia working with Germany or with Britain?" asks a newspaper. We learn from a reliable source that it is highly probable.

Central heating will be dearer this coming winter. It is already 14s. 3d. a bottle.

"The German people may again be good customers of this nation when the war is over," says a writer. Applications for advertising space on the back of R.A.F. leaflets will be dealt with in strict rotation.

Those Stiff Upper Lips

"Small Industrial declines were relieved by firm features here and there."—*Daily Mail*.



After inspecting the latest publicity photograph of Herr HITLER we must in fairness admit that he is the only man in the world who can strut sitting down.

Opponents of the increased tax on tobacco point out that non-smokers do not bear their fair share of present-day burdens. Nor, be it noted, do they help to keep the moth out of the carpets.

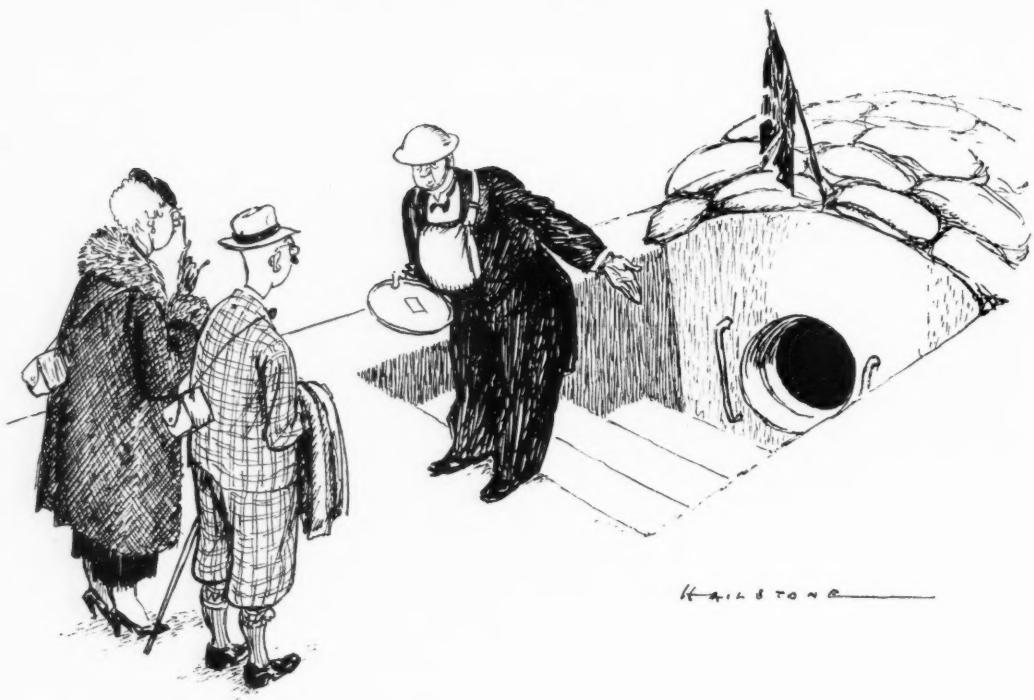
"HITLER AT NOON TO-DAY"
Newspaper placard.
At Doorn to-morrow?

An artist boasts that he can place a face anywhere. Maybe he can, but wouldn't it look silly anywhere else?



We read that Herr HITLER had a recording made of his Reichstag speech. He probably wanted to know what he said.

A boat manned by anglers off the American coast was holed by a giant swordfish. Dr. GOEBBELS, however, declares that the responsibility rests entirely with Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL.



"If you will kindly take a seat on the steps, Sir, I will ascertain whether his lordship is at home."

Strategy and the Official

TAPPING politely on the door and entering with appropriate diffidence, I put my little proposition to the inquiries-cum-ticket-clerk. He was in his shirt-sleeves whistling "South of the Border," and made no reply until he had quite finished it.

"That," he said, "is an absolute impossibility. Against all the rules and regulations."

He repeated the "Ay-ay-ay-ay" bit, scratching the small of his back with his thumb, waiting for me to go. I offered him a bribe, but he made a clicking noise with his tongue, so I put my cigarette-case away again.

"I'd stay this side of the counter," I said, "really I would. I only want to finish this till I can meet my wife off the 7.41. It's rather good. Have you read it?"

I held up *The Manchester Mystery*, but he didn't look at it, merely moving a couple of time-tables from one side of the counter to the other. He hadn't the appearance of a reader of detective

fiction or I would have won him over at once by explaining that I'd just reached Professor Felway's last-chapter dinner-party, where all the suspects had been invited to find out if they'd done it or not.

I put the thing to him.

"After all," I said, "you've got a blazing great light in here, quite strong enough for two of us, and outside there's nothing to see by but a blue glimmer and the sparks from the live rail. Besides, it's cold."

He moved the time-tables back and did something to the top of his oil-stove which caused the pattern of a yellow jelly to be suddenly thrown on the ceiling.

"I shall be no trouble, I promise you. No interfering with your work, tearing up the insurance forms or fooling about popping bombs into corners. All I ask is a go with your light to find out how Ezekiel Grimshaw came to be lying dead in an elder-bush with a mouthful of spent matches."

He knocked the lid off a box of new tickets.

"After all," I wheedled, "it's only for twelve minutes, and of course I'll own up at once if the inspectors look in—"

"Can't be done," said the man, and tugged violently at a piece of rope hanging against the wall. For an uneasy moment I thought he was ringing for the station-master to have me court-martialled, but it only turned out to be a dodge for opening the door. A wave of cold air swept in. I picked up my book.

"Out into the snow, eh?" I said, smiling wryly.

"That's right," said the man, and at that moment a voice demanding one and a half third singles to Wallington recalled him to his priest's hole on the other side of the room. He released the piece of rope and the heavy door assisted me unceremoniously on to the platform, where I stood for a minute in the blackness rubbing my elbow and thinking. Then I went back.

He seemed surprised to see me.
"Look here," I began, putting *The Munchester Mystery* on the counter, "can I——?"

He banged a handful of coppers down and came quickly over.

"I've told you 'alf a dozen times," he said ferociously, "I got my instructions not to have nobody in here but officials of the company an' bonerfidey seekers after information, so it's no good you trying it on."

"But can't you——?"

"No," said the man, "I can't. And that's flat."

"But you do advertise dog-tickets, you know," I persisted gently. "There's a simply enormous poster in the Edgware Road with a couple of dogs saying 'Don't leave us behind.' I'm sure you must have seen it. There's a big dog with a——"

"Who's talking about dogs?" he demanded uneasily.

"Why, I am!" I said in mild surprise. "Didn't you know? I was going to ask you, only we got interrupted, what would be the best way to send my dog down to Llandrindod Wells—R.S.P.C.A., and so on. I thought perhaps you could look me out one of your forms to fill up, and some train-times and the cost. To save me troubling you when you're very busy, you know."

I smiled my most engaging smile, the one that doesn't emphasise the missing teeth on the top left-hand side.

"So if you could find me a form . . ." I said.

He looked about for a way of escape.

"It says Dogs on the top," I volunteered, "because I've had one before. But I expect you know all about it."

And I took *The Munchester Mystery* as near the light as I could get, and found quite a comfortable gladstone bag to sit on.

The man banged several time-tables about with a nasty show of temper and a great deal of dust and began ferreting unhelpfully about under the counter, muttering something about my dog. He seemed to think it must be a red setter. Meanwhile I got on pretty briskly with the dinner-party, skipping along shamelessly and thinking what short cigarettes people smoke in books. I was disappointed to find that I'd been suspecting the right suspect all along, although the clue I'd been working on about his shocking grammar in the second chapter was one that Professor Felway had overlooked completely. And I was furious to notice that the spent matches, the only thing that had held my attention for the last two hundred pages, never so much as

got a mention in the summing-up. It may have been my indignation over this that made me more unkind than necessary when the shuffling and banging stopped on the other side of the counter.

"Here," said the man, pushing at me a document yellow with age—"here's your form." Privately he added with some venom, "Dogs!"

"Well," I said, slipping *The Munchester Mystery* between two parcels of newspapers, "thanks very much indeed, but I'm afraid you'll think me a dreadful ass, because I've just remembered it's not the dog I want to send away at all. He went last week."

He just looked at me.

"No," I said, opening the door myself this time and getting well round the other side of it; "it's bagpipes—to go to Taunton. Musical instruments, I believe they come under, but I'll look in for the form some other time. Good night."

The 7.41 was just coming in, so I didn't hear if he said good night or anything.

• • •

Beavers

WHEN reading my paper to-day, A thing that I do as a start— Though candour compels me to say

I leave out the stodgier part, At a casual glance I descried A letter in which there appeared The expression, with obvious pride, "My husband's magnificent beard."

In middle-Victorian books

The feminine writers, you'll note,

For every hero *de luxe*

Provided a beard like a goat;

It was noble, majestic, and rich,

And mainly afforded a place,

At a time of emotion, in which

The heroine buried her face.

But fashion denuded the chin;

The "safety" completed the rout;

The clean-shaven visage came in

And even moustaches went out;

And to-day there's a lady I know

Who spotted a symptom, and

swore

If He didn't remove It she'd go,

And meant what she said, which is more.

Still, changes work ever in rings;

Moustaches may burgeon anew;

E'en beards, though I don't like the things,

May gladden the feminine view;

They may act on the girl like a drug

As something hypnotic and rare,

Though I don't see her bury her mug,

Though moved, in a worry of hair.

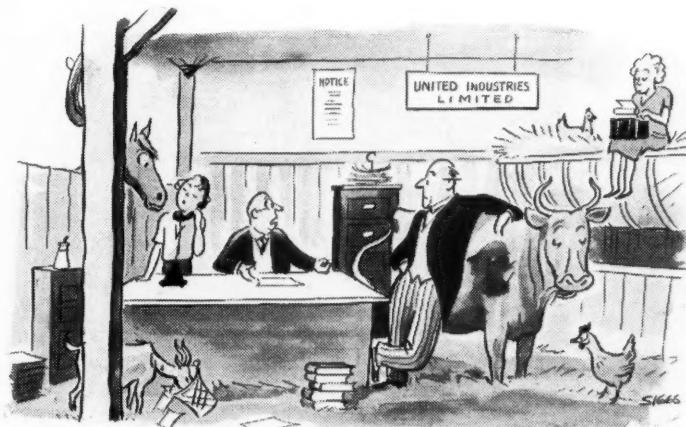
And well for the lucky 'twill be
Whose growths are abundant and fine,

But what of the scraggy (like me)
With three-coloured patches (like mine)?

Be it far; for I frankly admit
That no one, however endeared,
Could by stretching the truth till it split

Extol my "magnificent beard."

DUM-DUM.



"As in the last war, Pendleby, the firm's policy will be 'Business as Usual.'"

Only a Fairy Story

ONCE upon a time there was a Knight who was told on reliable authority that a large and extremely unpleasant dragon called Grendel, or Schickelgrüber, or whatever it may have been, was ravaging the country-side and making the woods unsafe for democracy or even for growing mushrooms in. "What is more," said the people, weeping, "it is on the point of devouring a beautiful maiden who has been tied for some reason or other to a tree in the forest of Gloom."

"I must see about this," thought the Knight, and he had his armour thoroughly repaired, and his sword sharpened, and his horse fed and caparisoned, and went out to argue with the dragon.

But the forest was a long way off and the dragon, which had already been certified as insane by several veterinary surgeons, had a tremendous appetite, so that by the time the Knight had pressed forward for a few miles amongst the trees the maiden had been eaten, and the dragon, who was still breathing bombastic menaces and pestilential propaganda through both nostrils, turned round and came towards the Knight and said: "And now what about it, my little man? All is well. The maiden is inside me owing to the glorious god-given sharpness of my good old dragon teeth which have never been known to fail in the hour of trial.

"I am replete," he went on, patting his stomach, "and my only concern now is for the peace and prosperity of the world. Hadn't you better run home and play?"

BUT the Knight answered very courteously, "There is a small divergence of opinion, O dragon, between you and me on this matter. Because you have devoured this poor maiden, and are satisfied, you would like me to regard you as a reasonable peace-loving animal, fulfilled with the noblest intentions and anxious for the universal good, whereas I for my part consider you to be a low-down, blood-stained and bellicose monstrosity whom I would not even care to introduce at a garden-party of bandits to one of the lowliest of the Gadarene swine."

And so saying he began to draw his sword.

But at this moment there came running several wise and eminently respectable old gentlemen from the Knight's own country, who in former times had spent most of the day dozing in arm-chairs and the rest of it in writing long and finely-expressed letters to the newspapers, and all of them with one accord shouted:

"Oi!"

"What is the matter now?" said the Knight.

"Before you go any further in this affair," said the old gentlemen, "one thing is absolutely vital."

"And what is that?" asked the Knight.

"You must elaborate your war aims," they said.

At this point the dragon roared and emitted an enormous spurt of flame from his mouth and raised both his front paws in the air.

"My war aims?" said the Knight, looking a little puzzled.

"Most certainly. Your war aims. Are you at this moment fighting against this dragon, and this dragon alone, remembering that there may be other animals, some dragons and some not dragons, in the depth of the forest; some friendly towards us, and some hostile? Or, to put it more briefly, are you fighting rather against the spiritual manifestation of aggressive dragonismus which is always liable to arise in these foreign parts? Or, to put it even more concisely, are you fighting with the intention of making it certain, by means of a series of future international conferences and the establishment of a system of irrefragable

safeguards throughout the world, that the spectre of militant dragon-worship, should it ever rear its ugly head again, shall be so much discouraged and dismayed at the aura of general disapproval which it encounters that practically speaking and to all intents and purposes—"

At this point the dragon, feeling hungry again, roared and snorted and lashed the ground fearfully with its tail, so that trees and houses fell over and the whole earth shook with its fury; and the Knight meditated for a few moments and said:

"**M**Y war aim, dear Sirs, is fairly simple at present. I am going to try to strike this dragon through the middle with my sword. What I do afterwards can be considered when the battle is over, can't it? That is the general rule in dragon-fights, I believe."

"But this is impossible!" cried the old men, all shouting all kinds of things at once. "Surely you realise that unless you state explicitly—"

"—and make a public proclamation to the whole world—"

"—and tabulate your ideals of chivalry—"

"—and issue a detailed statement of the precise organisation—"

"—and ensure the prevention of the recurrence of these unfortunate imbroglios—"

"—and codify and consolidate the conditions of universal confraternity—"

"Stop, old men," said the Knight, "and let me tell you a thing. I have one reason and only one reason just now for trying to kill this dragon."

"And what is your reason?"

"Because if I don't it will kill me."

"And that goes for you too," he added, turning round in his saddle and looking at the old men, "and for all the things you have been talking about. So scram!"

And then the dragon roared loudly again and spat another jet of fire, and walked ten paces nearer. And the Knight drew his sword.

EVOE.

War Harvest

HOMEWARD the harvest wain
Brings life for men again;
The faithful field,
Despoiled of its rich yield,
Awaits the rain and frost
That build the strength it lost,
And, duty done,
Lies empty to the sun.

He, the great Lord of Light,
Burning and bright,
Still flings his flaming spark
Through the defeated dark
To where, through nothing hurled,
A good-for-nothing world
Pursues in tears and wrath
Its aimless path.

Pale splendour fills the West
As home to their brief rest
Go wain and wagoner.
Light breezes stir
The still green, gracious leaves
Where Autumn weaves
Spells more enduring far
Than the mad dreams of War.

ALGOL.



THE BALTIC POWERS

“This is *my* dinner. You eat yours.”

On the Water Front

Should Sailors Swim?

IT sounds silly, maybe. But it is not. And it is topical.

On our summer holiday (how long ago!) the little French place was put into a high state of anxiety and commotion one night by cries of "*Au secours!*" In the morning, when the tide had fallen, the dead body of a young man was found far out on the rocks. Later it was reported that he had set out from a neighbouring resort in a canoe, and could not swim.

He had gone to sea—more, he had attempted a voyage along a rocky coast—in a canoe—though unable to swim.

* * * * *

One day, anchored in the Thames at Hammersmith, I heard a crash against the side of my boat. I ran out and saw that one of those "tooth-picks," single-sculling-skiffs, or whatever they are called, travelling swiftly on the ebb, had charged our capacious flanks and upset. The oarsman was in the water and was being swept past by the tide. These bold fellows are often in trouble, for they take out their flimsy and difficult craft in rough water and stormy weather. As a rule, no one worries much; they can swim, they hold on, and, if they are not picked up, kick themselves and their boats to the shore. However, I hurried aft and was just in time to throw this fellow a rope before he was carried out of reach. As he caught it he remarked casually, "I can't swim." And later he told me that that was his first trip in a "tooth-pick." I even gathered that it was his first attempt at sculling in anything. *And he chose to make it in a "tooth-pick," on the tide-way, and unable to swim.*

One does not feel like lecturing a dead man, or even a lunatic who at the moment is in some danger of drowning. But here, perhaps, one may mildly remark that anyone who goes to sea in a canoe without being able to swim, and anyone who makes his first attempt at sculling in a "tooth-pick" on a three-head tide without being able to swim, ought not to be surprised or indignant if, sooner or later, he encounters some misfortune.

Yet it is not easy to be properly cross with the crazy amateurs when one considers the example set by the hard-headed professional mariner. There is one classic precedent for such insanity in the great Captain Slocum's *Sailing Alone Around the World*. The Captain, having sailed alone from North

America to Gibraltar and back to South America, ran ashore one night on the coast of, I think, Uruguay. The tide was falling and all he could do was to "lay out a kedge anchor." This meant embarking the anchor, the cable, and himself in his small "dory" or "dinghy." The load was too much for the dinghy, and some way from the ship she began to sink. The Captain threw the anchor over and realised that he must do something drastic, for "suddenly," he writes: "I remembered that I could not swim."

"Suddenly." And he had travelled about seven thousand miles across the ocean all by himself.

* * * * *

True, that was in the 'nineties, before everyone was registered and graded and insured and instructed and licensed and made to do what they ought to do. But the same heroic incapacity still prevails to-day.

Almost everyone has talked to a seaman, waterman, pilot, fisherman, bargeman, lighterman, or merely boatman. And almost everyone, with some surprise, has heard one of these professional waterfarers say that he could not swim, had never tried to swim, and did not propose to begin now.

One of the best of marine entertainments is to watch the face and interpret the mind of the professional waterman as the laymen (and laywomen) eagerly remove their clothes and plunge into the water. He has spent all his life keeping out of the water—for money: and here are people deliberately entering

it—for pleasure. He cannot understand it. The fireman, I suppose, is equally mystified by the pleasure which many citizens derive from lighting bonfires or letting off fireworks.

But this is taking a charitable view. For, as most of us know, there is much more than that at the back of the mariner's mind. There is, in fact, one of the strangest of all the beliefs and superstitions of the simple mariner—the notion that it is *better* that he should not be able to swim, so that if he goes overboard he will perish quickly or at once.

There would seem to be some sense in this tradition if it were established that, once overboard, a man was bound to drown. One thinks of "shark-infested waters"; one thinks of sailing-ships in wintry weather off the Horn; and one is inclined to say, "There is a lot in that." But one is wrong.

For in the worst conditions there is always the chance of rescue if a man can keep himself afloat and alive till it arrives. Men have been rescued from "shark-infested waters." Indeed, I understand, so timid is the shark at heart that one has only to splash vigorously and the shark withdraws—though I should not care to try it myself. In one of Mr. A. J. Villiers' fine books there is a thrilling tale of a man going overboard in a stormy sea off Cape Horn. Contrary to tradition, experience, and the demands of prudence, he put the ship about and, to his own astonishment, recovered and saved the man. So even there . . .

And, after all, those are exceptional conditions. In these days the seamen rounding the Horn, approaching the Pole, or even sailing in sailing-ships must be a very small proportion of the whole. And the others, it seems to me, have no excuse whatever for the faintest inability to swim. For whenever, wherever, the sailor falls in the water, others will be eager to fish him out, and will try: and by his lack of swimming ability he will endanger not his life only but the lives of others.

Suppose a bargeman, safe in harbour or dock, falls into that harbour or dock. If he can swim, if he is accustomed to entering the water, enjoying it, and emerging alive, he can get himself to the nearest chain, boat or stairs, and cling and yell till somebody comes. If not he goes down like a stone. What consolation will his





POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS—LIFE WHEN MOTHER WAS YOUNG

widow extract from the old ocean stuff about "better a quick death than a lingering one"? That dilemma does not arise. Yet my dear bargemen are as bad as any; perhaps they are worse than most, because they belong (delightfully) to an age that is past. Many are the circumstances which may put a bargeman "in the ditch"; but few are those in which there can be absolutely no hope of rescue—for a swimmer, so the "no-lingering death" stuff is no good excuse.

And that applies, surely, to the yacht-hand. I am always astonished to read that a deck-hand went overboard at Cowes or Ryde and was drowned. At Cowes—in broad daylight—with innumerable craft at hand! Why? The answer, surely, must nearly always be "Because he could not swim."

The Board of Trade, some say, can be too fussy and maternal; and far be it from us to propose unnecessary additions to the mass of regulations. Yet it would not, we feel, be wildly

unreasonable or vexatious if it were laid down simply that "No person shall go upon the water for hire or pay unless he holds a certificate that he can swim."

* * * * *

Now we are at war, and the risk of drowning, in all waters, is not diminished. The other day we were talking at the "Anchor Tavern" to old John —, a lighterman, one of the fine fellows whom our service is designed to assist, protect and, if possible, save. But so far from being grateful, John was complaining. While we "yachtsmen" were patrolling (or waiting to patrol) the river there were a lot of licensed watermen ("practical men") out of work ashore—the sort of nonsense, in short, of which there has been too much. I answered sadly that for this particular game, he was *not* a "practical man." "You could no more handle my craft," I said, "than I could handle a lighter—much less, in fact, because you know nothing about

the internal combustion engine. You haven't done a Gas Course, you know no semaphore or Morse. Nevertheless, you know a lot that we don't know. I'm glad to say I have one licensed waterman aboard already, and I'd gladly have another—on one condition: My crew must be able to swim. Can you swim, John?"

"Swim?" he said. "Of course not. Don't believe in it." A. P. H.

○ ○

Deep Stuff

"Everyone here believes it was the speech of a worried man. His voice was low and fretful throughout the majority of his address, and even his high notes were octaves lower than usual."—*Northern Paper*.

○ ○

"It is, of course, well known that tea stocks were widely distributed throughout the country as protection against air-raids."—*Liverpool Paper*.

Of course. Look at all those sacks.

At the Pictures

AGAIN

YES, for the second week in succession; for as the only entertainment in London that's functioning more or less normally, the cinema deserves a little more notice than usual.

Unfortunately this page goes to press before I've seen several "big" films announced to begin at the week-end. About the best new film in London at the moment of writing is *Tell No Tales* (Director: LESLIE FENTON), which is at the Regal as second feature to an inferior one called *Black Eyes* and isn't even mentioned in many of the advertisements.

In outline, the story is the sort of thing we have all heard before: newspaper-man catches gangsters, wins girl. But this film is full of excellent detail and the smallest part is a genuine character; add these qualities to its pace and excitement and you have something well worth seeing. The direction is admirable (and this is a new director).

Moreover, there is a certain sense about the whole proceeding. True, the newspaper-man is after that mainspring of all newspaper stories, a scoop; but he is the managing-editor of an old-established paper which the owner wishes to stop, and his real aim is to save his paper and the jobs of all the people on it. This he does—you may have guessed. But there is no such inevitability about the rest of the picture. In its unpretentious way it is first-rate. The freshness of many of the scenes (I don't remember ever before seeing a Negro funeral party, for instance), the excellence of all the playing, give one the same sort of unexpected pleasure as was given (also unexpectedly, you may remember) by *The Thin Man*.

MELVYN DOUGLAS is the newspaper-man; and LOUISE PLATT gives real credibility to the part of the distressed heroine—which is, considering how comparatively little she has to do, something of a feat. Among the other players are DOUGLAS DUMBRILLE, GENE LOCKHART, and numbers of people who have only a little to do but do it extremely well.

FERNANDEL is once more among the military in *Ignace* (Director: PIERRE COLOMBIER), as he was in *Un de la Légion*; but apart from this the contrast between the two films is immense. No part of this

one is meant to be taken seriously; it is, in fact, all built round FERNANDEL, to give him opportunities for a string

burst into song. There is no point in being distressed at the "unimportance" of all this; the French may be better than anybody else at serious films, but that's no reason why they shouldn't sometimes be allowed to unbend and produce something trivial.

And FERNANDEL makes it all very funny; he is a joy to watch. Here, as *Ignace*, he is a conscript who becomes the *Colonel's* batman. The inhabitants and the guests at the *Colonel's* house behave most of the time with musical-comedy extravagance, and the plot—which involves the solution of all problems by *Ignace*, who has unwittingly put on the *Colonel's* uniform—has a musical-comedy incredibility; but who cares? the whole show is merely an excuse for FERNANDEL.

This being so it's surprising to find CHARPIN and SATURNIN FABRE, who were so fine in *Hostages*, wasted respectively as the *Colonel* and an elderly buffoon called the *Count*. However, I suppose they can be allowed to unbend too. . . . The film will certainly make you laugh; if you want to laugh, see it.

In that machine-made but efficient thriller *Cat and the Canary* (Director: ELLIOTT NUGENT) we have another distressed heroine; again well performed, this time by PAULETTE GODDARD. The first (wasn't it?) of all those clutching-hand-out-of-the-wall plays wears well. BOB HOPE, who is, whether you like him or not, an exceedingly skilful comedian, is there to relieve the nervous tension by raising laughs with such observations as "Even my goose-pimples have goose-pimples." The sliding panels, the secret passages, the darkness, and the dead body that falls into the library are all there as usual. It's quite funny, quite exciting, quite absurd.

Devil on Wheels (Director: LLOYD BACON) is a thriller, or would-be thriller, of a different kind: it tries to excite us about motor-racing. Occasionally it succeeds, but on the whole it's not very bright. PAT O'BRIEN is the elder brother who wants his younger brother to stay out of the racing business and go to college, and JOHN PAYNE is the younger brother who doesn't agree. GALE PAGE and ANN SHERIDAN are the girls, and FRANK MCHUGH, excellent as ever, is the comic relief. Every crack in the drama is filled with the roar of engines, clouds of dust and smoke, and the false liveliness of race-track announcers.

R. M.



EDITOR IN SEARCH OF COPY

*Ellen Frazier . . . LOUISE PLATT
Michael Cassidy . . . MELVYN DOUGLAS*

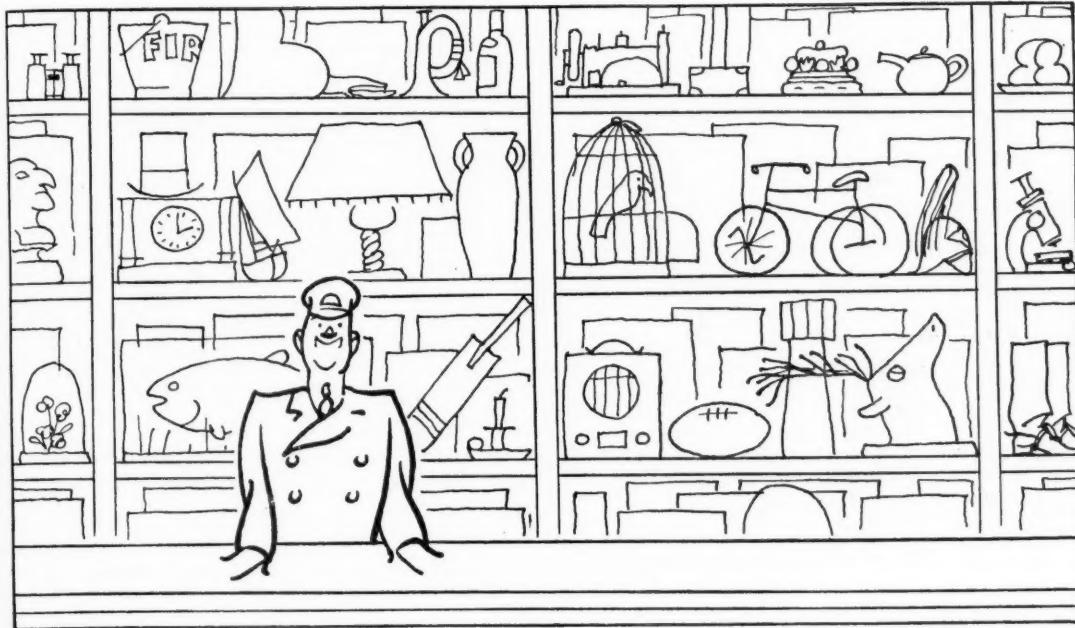


THE SEER

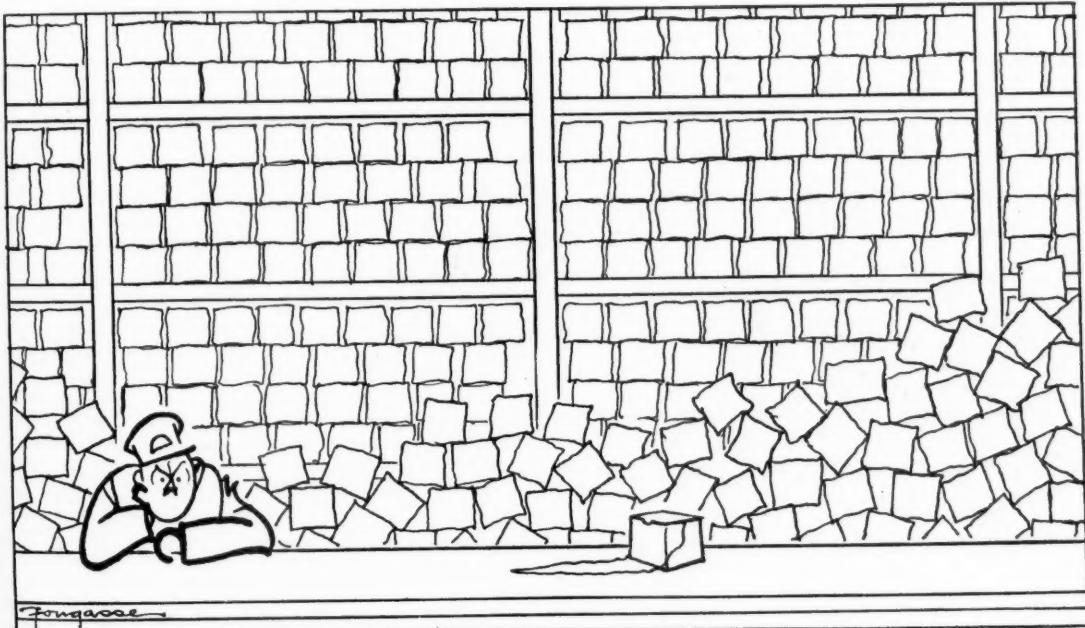
Ignace . . . FERNANDEL

THE CHANGING FACE OF BRITAIN

X.—LOST PROPERTY OFFICE



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Behind the Lines

IV

The Hausfrau Speaks

READ to me only from thine *Kampf*,
And I will read from *Mein*,
And we will all our hunger dampf
For other means to dine.

Great oaks from little acorns came . . .
Now coffee comes instead;
And sawdust by another name
Is just as sweet as bread;

The pools of grease, the pools of grease
Where sizzling bacon sings
Are gone before the hallowed peace
The Author's Preface brings.

Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife,
Proclaim to man and beast
One chapter of our Fuehrer's life
Is better than a feast.

Long words are more than hamburgers,
Ay, more than *sauerkraut*,
And simple German faith prefers
Mein Kampf to getting stout.

Hans Anderson my Johann's brow
Was like the raven when
He started Chapter One, and now
He's grey at Chapter Ten.

Say not the struggle gangs agley—
It gave his hunger spice
To read by accident one day
The Seventh Chapter twice.



"Then of course there are all these neutral States."

A beetroot by the river's brim
When stuffed with hips and haws
A tasty sausage is to him
Who lives by Hitler's laws.

Oh, who will o'er the town with me,
Oh, who will with me roam
To search for half a pound of tea . . .
And bring some nettles home.

A. A. M.

o o

Investigations of Hector Tumbler

Murder at The Sarcophagus Club

IN the 1930 edition of *Who's Who* against the name of Hector Tumbler appears the entry "Clubs: Brain-storm, Sarcophagus." In the 1931 edition the entry is merely "Club: Brainstorm." Readers of out-of-date copies of *Who's Who* must often have speculated about those two entries and wondered what secrets, if any, lay behind them. Now, when nearly a decade has passed and the chief actors in the drama are all either dead or buried, I think the time has come to rend the veil.

One day in 1931 the great detective and I had an appointment to meet a Mr. J. W. Beardworthy for lunch at the Sarcophagus. Who this Beardworthy was or why we had to meet him I cannot remember. But that is beside the point.

Tumbler was too sensitive, too much of a solitary perhaps to be called a confirmed clubman. If he were once black-balled at a club, indeed, or forcibly removed from the premises, it was only with the greatest difficulty that he could be induced to visit the place again. But he liked the Sarcophagus. He liked the rather somnolent atmosphere of the old building in Piccadilly, where all was immemorial tradition, where letters from Pitt to Fox, or even from Fox to Pitt, slumbered forgotten and unread in the pigeon-holes, and where many a member had been known to fall asleep while handing in his hat at the cloakroom.

As we entered the narrow though frowning portals of the club on that August day the sound of distant snoring came like a hymn to our ears. We had no inkling of the tragedy that lay before us.

"Is Mr. Beardworthy in the club?" asked Tumbler with a yawn.

At the third repetition of the question the aged porter's eyes opened. Thumbways had been in the service of the club for scores of years, and he was even known to every member by sight.

"I'll just go and inquire, Sir," he said at last, and shuffled off. For a long time we stood there, staring at our own reflections in the fireplace. Suddenly Thumbways reappeared. His manner expressed consternation.

"Will you step this way, gentlemen?" he said in a quavering tone. "I'm afraid something terrible has happened. Mr. Beardworthy is dead."

Dead! The word came like a thunderclap. We quickened our pace to the library. There lay the dead man in his easy-chair, just as he had passed away. Not even his gold watch had been removed. His eyes were fixed and staring, his mouth wide open. More singular still, his coat-buttons were twisted and hanging loose. It was a dreadful sight. Even Tumbler, accustomed though he was to the spectacle of death in its most frightful aspects, could scarcely suppress a yawn.

"How did he die?" I whispered.

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"But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?"

Tumbler stood up very straight. "Beardworthy did not die a natural death," he said sternly. "He was murdered."

I stared in bewilderment. About us on every side lay the club members in their easy-chairs, ageless and immobile, looming like deep-sea monsters through the heavy atmosphere. Only one sound broke the quiet: a deep droning noise, indescribably sinister, came from the far end of the room. As we listened it resolved itself into the voice of a Mr. C. F. Midgley, by general consent the club's most boring member. A small bald-headed man in a grey suit and knitted silk tie, he leaned forward as he spoke, keeping a firm grip on the lapel of his victim's coat. His eyes, behind powerful lenses, had a ghoulish gleam. We caught snatches of his conversation.

"After that I tried Harrogate . . . this doctor, I can't remember his name . . . may have been Macintosh . . . reminds me of a Macintosh I met in Grimsby . . . I can't remember the exact year . . . anyhow, curiously enough this Macintosh had exactly the same complaint as myself . . ."

With an effort we shook ourselves awake. Suddenly Tumbler gave an exclamation. He pointed to one of the motionless figures, then to another, and another. All at once the truth flashed upon me. Not merely Beardworthy was dead! Of the thirty members in the room, not more than six remained alive!

In the face of a tragedy so appalling I could only turn to Tumbler for support. The master brain, it seemed, was already busy. Abstractedly the detective sank into a heavily-carved mahogany deck-chair near the fireplace. This trance-like state, I knew well, would be the prelude either to some miracle of deduction or to a request for a small loan. In this instance I had every reason to believe it would be the former.

For what seemed hours but was really, I found out afterwards, several days, we sat there while Midgley's voice droned on. Suddenly Tumbler spoke.

"I have solved the problem," he said solemnly. "Beardworthy and the other members met their death in no ordinary fashion. Observe the twisted coat-buttons, the

glassy stare. I stake my reputation on it. They died of boredom. In a word, they were bored to death."

"But who—?" I asked in astonishment.

Tumbler laid his finger to his lips. I looked round and saw that Midgley had risen from his chair and was coming slowly towards us.

"Are you prepared to risk your life to bring a murderer to justice?" whispered Tumbler hurriedly.

I nodded.

"Wait here, then," he went on, "while I telephone the Yard."

He slipped away. Another moment and Midgley had drawn up a chair close to mine and was telling me about a solicitor he had known in Weymouth, whose name he could not remember. As I listened a feeling of numbness came over me; objects floated indistinctly in my sight; I tried to shout for help but no sound came from my lips. I saw it all now. The fingers that gripped the third button of my waistcoat so firmly were the fingers of a murderer. It was a horrible situation.

Presently Tumbler returned and Midgley turned his attention to higher game. Now began a veritable battle of the giants. In his day Tumbler had had a high reputation as a bore; once in my presence he had reduced three commercial travellers to insensibility. Now he put forth all his powers. He discussed proportional representation in all its aspects; he touched on bimetallism. But he was fighting a losing battle. Midgley broke in with a description of a bridge party at Torquay in 1904, and followed it up with an account of a visit to Congleton in 1895. Tumbler was wilting visibly under this inexorable pressure. It was obvious that he could not hold out much longer. Would the police arrive in time?

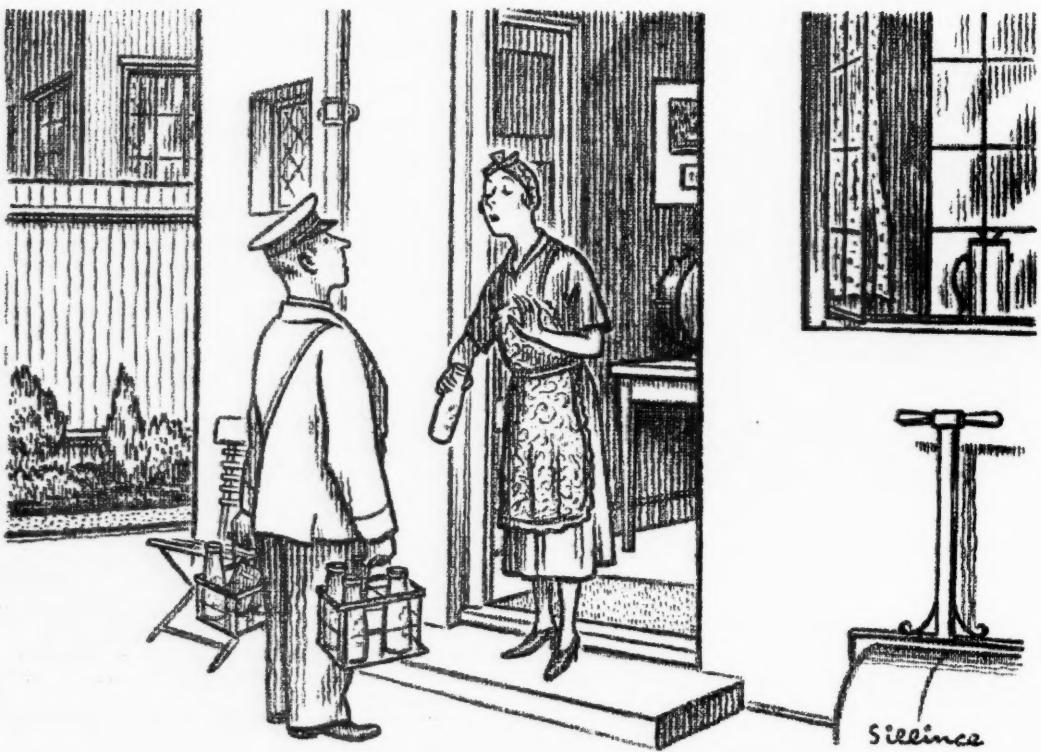
Then, just when all hope seemed lost, Midgley suddenly leaped to his feet. A heavy step was heard on the threshold. The burly figure of Detective-Inspector Mandrake entered.

"Charles Frabbingham Midgley," came the ominous words, "I arrest you on a charge of wilful murder. I must warn you that anything you say may be taken down and used as evidence against you."

A mad light had come into the murderer's face.

"Anything I say?" he muttered. Then, grasping the Inspector firmly by the tunic, he began. By the time the Inspector, dazed and helpless, had broken two pencils and used up his third notebook Tumbler and I had left the club unobserved.





"I never believe a rumour unless it's official!"

From the Home Front

Thoughts on the Big Four

WE were talking the other night about the way great men behave when they sit in council. I mean we were wondering how they behave when they so sit and what they talk about. If you consider for a moment such meetings as those of the Allied War Council, when giants like Mr. Chamberlain, M. Daladier, General Gamelin and Lord Gort come together to consult, isn't it a little difficult to imagine in what manner they converse and how they decide which of the hundred possible problems to discuss? One feels that the magnitude of the issues involved is such that discussion of them in ordinary speech is almost an insult. However, obviously they do talk.

French, one imagines, is the language used at these titanic moots—the French of the school-book perhaps rather than that of the native, out of consideration

for the feelings of the English party. But as to what is said one can only guess. The official communiqués give little clue. "A good time," they say in effect, "was had by all," or, in greater detail, "The complete identity of interests of the two countries was again reaffirmed." Well, you can't get much out of that, though it's wonderful what the leader-writers manage to do with it next morning.

Personally (though Gunner Briggs disagrees with me) I am inclined to think that these talks must go something like this:—

General Gamelin (*slapping his hand down on an enormous map*). I shall strike here!

Lord Gort. Why not a little to the right—say, here?

General Gamelin. Excellent. Very shrewd. I shall strike as you suggest—here.

Mr. Chamberlain (*aside, to a pale secretary*). Let it be announced that complete agreement on all material points has already been reached.

General Gamelin (*continuing*). For this operation I shall need a million men, six thousand guns, twelve divisions of tanks and a hundred and thirty-eight captive balloons.

M. Daladier (*biting his luxurious moustaches—or, if he hasn't any moustaches, cracking the joints of his left hand in a nervous gesture characteristic of the man*). Zut! I have of balloons one hundred and twenty-nine only. It is finished.

Mr. Chamberlain. Not so, my friend. See, I have seven hundred balloons, the very best. You shall have them. I have a thousand guns, sixteen brigades of cavalry and two hundred and seventy fast-moving tanks. I have also forty-eight field

kitchens, sixty-two miles of barbed-wire, a million and a half pairs of ammunition boots, and twenty-six sets of entrenching tools of the highest class. All these are at your disposal.

Lord Gort. Here! Steady on! The British Navy—

General Gamelin. Exactly. The contribution made by the British Navy to the Allied cause must never be forgotten. Permit me to return to you, Sir, the forty-eight field kitchens which with a generosity the most unexampled you have placed at the disposal of France. The sons of France—

Mr. Chamberlain. La Belle France!

General Gamelin (with a slight bow). I thank you, Sir. It is a pleasure to work with you. The sons of La Belle France will not forget that at this supreme moment in the destiny of our two countries Britain stood ready to sacrifice her entire surplus stock of field kitchens to ensure the comfort and well-being of our gallant troops. In declining your munificent and high-principled offer—

Lord Gort (frowning at the map). I say, look here. Supposing these Nazis invade Hungary and start attacking Roumania that way, what do we do then?

M. Daladier. France stands unalterably by the principles to which she dedicated herself at the outbreak of hostilities. Faced by the threat of a militaristic hegemony of Europe—

Lord Gort. I know. But what shall we do?

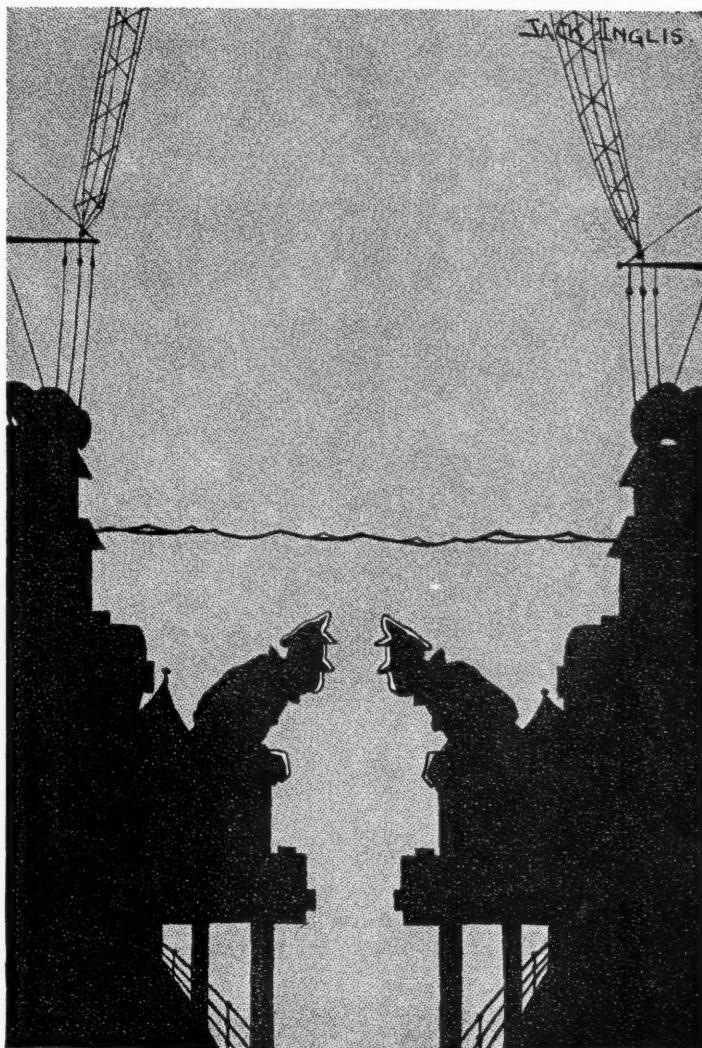
General Gamelin (with a downward gesture of genuine grandeur). In the event you mention I shall strike here!

Mr. Chamberlain. You've got your finger in the sea. You'll get wet.

General Gamelin. It is nothing. I thank you. A mere trifle. The place I wished to indicate is of course here. You see? What an enchantment! My right is on the hill, my left advances with a crab-like movement, my centre conceals itself with foliage. There are skirmishings. Here, by the little church with the steeple, we go forward, there we make a strategic withdrawal. The enemy is nonplussed. He places his artillery here, here and here. Then—*pouf!* I advance and it is over. The enemy throws away his useless weapons and flees in confusion. It is a good plan.

Lord Gort. It is excellent. And my men—where are they?

General Gamelin. Everywhere they are received with acclamation and cups of coffee by the sturdy French villagers. Their uniforms and their bearing excite the utmost admiration. The solid ties of interest which unite



"Who are you?"
"I'm your brother. Who are you?"

our two peoples are cemented by the irrefragable bonds of fellowship and comradely feeling.

Mr. Chamberlain. I suggest that that noble sentence form the substance of our communiqué this afternoon.

M. Daladier (stretching his legs and lighting a long cigar). Well, boys, I'm tired of all this. What about having an *apéritif*?

* * * * *

If you don't feel satisfied that that is the way they talk, go ahead and suggest something better. H. F. E.

"CHARTERING SIEGFRIED LINE"
Headline in Northern Paper.

Is it afloat at last?

○ ○

"Attention is drawn to Clauses 8, 9 and 10 of Order No. 12 by the Food and Commerce Control Board of the 9th. September, 1939, which run as follows:

8. Any trader whose licence has been suspended or cancelled shall be affixed to the door of his place or places of business."

Malta Paper.

It's best to have only one.



"Do you think you could manage just one more autograph, please?"

Somewhere in England

SOMEWHERE there must be music, and great swags of flowers,
leisured meals lasting for hours, and smooth green lawns and roses.

Somewhere there must be dogs with velvet noses, and people lounging in big chairs, and bees buzzing in the pears.

So short a while, and yet how long, how long, since I was idling golden days away, shopping a little and going to the play!

Somewhere the red leaves must be fluttering down, but I am on my way to Kentish Town in Mrs. Brodie's van, which has no brakes and rattles like a can.

To-morrow I shall go to Wanstead Flats with bales of straw, or a cargo of tin-hats, or ninety mattresses to aid the nether portions of the Fire Brigade.

Not for me a quiet stroll along the Mall, I must be off to Woolwich Arsenal with our Miss West; and it seems I cannot rest, there shall be no folding of my feet at all till I have been to Islington Town Hall with a buff envelope.

Some day it is my tenderest dearest hope

to have my hair washed, and I would love to buy something—anything so long as I could stop for a moment and look into the window of a shop.

Somewhere there must be women reading books, and talking of chicken-rissoles to their cooks; but every time I try to read *The Grapes of Wrath* I am sent forth on some occupation apparently immensely vital to the nation.

To my disappointed cook I only say I shan't need any meals at all to-day.

Somewhere I know they're singing songs of praise and going happily to matinées and home to buttered toast, but I at my post shall bravely turn my thoughts from such enjoyment.

Ah for the time when, blest with unemployment, I lived a life of sweet content—leisured and smug and opulent!

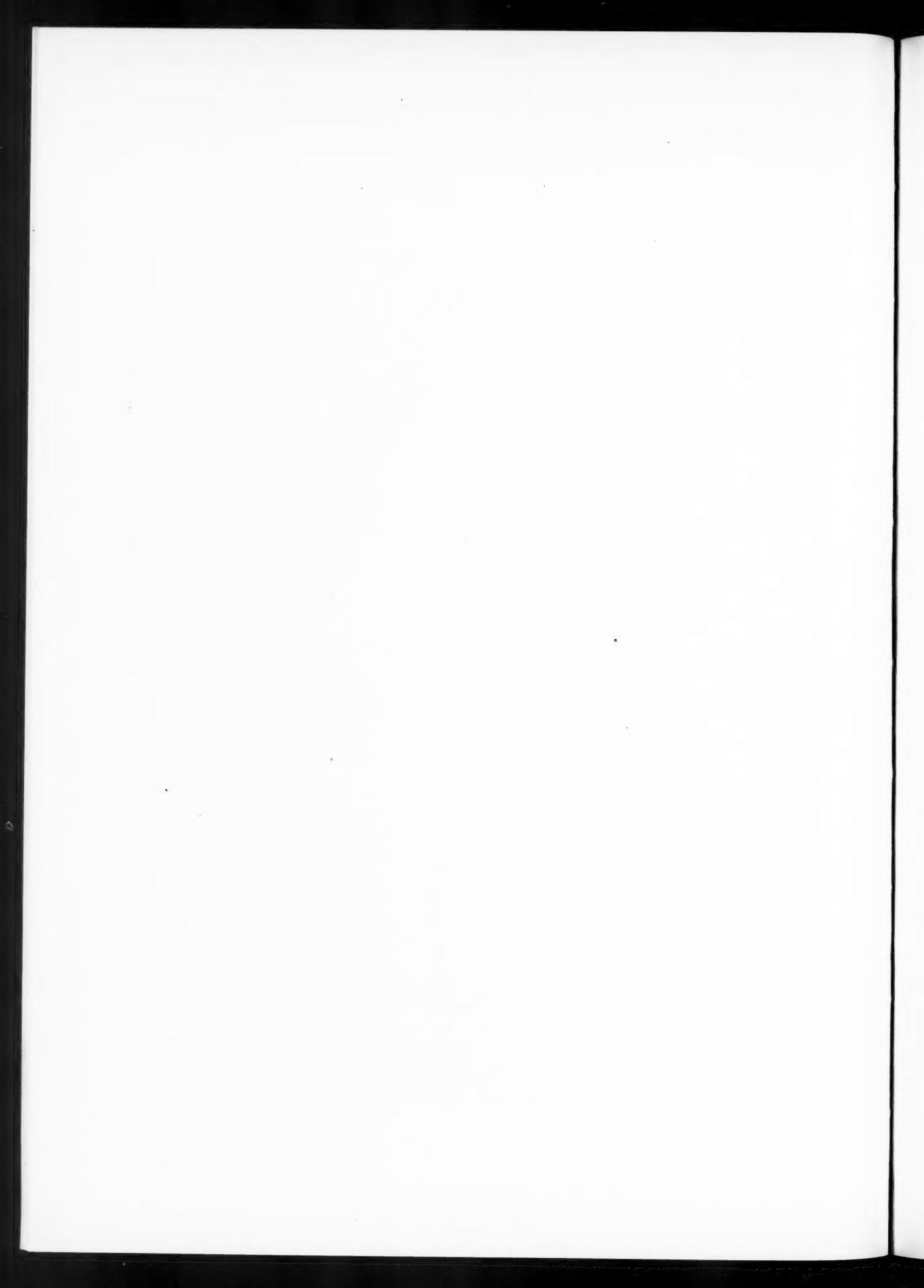
Fear not, Miss Tatham, I am ready as you see, to go to Romford Hospital or Lea.

Be not dismayed, I will not stray or roam, Look how I fly to Brookwood Mental Home! See with what patriotic speed I go to Poplar, Ealing, Beckenham and Bow!

V. G.



JOHN BULL'S WAR AIM



Impressions of Parliament

Synopsis of the Week

Monday, October 9th.—Commons: Debates on Education and War Insurances.

Tuesday, October 10th.—Lords: Execution of Trusts (Emergency Provisions) Bill passed.

Commons: Finance Bill given Third Reading. Sir Kingsley Wood's Survey of War in the Air.

Wednesday, October 11th.—Lords: Commandeering of Hotels discussed.

Commons: Mr. Hore-Belisha on the B.E.F. Debate on Ministry of Information.

Thursday, October 12th.—Lords: Reply to Hitler.

Commons: Reply to Hitler.

Monday, October 9th.—Colonel EVANS earned the gratitude of all sensible people by drawing attention to the attempt of the Agricultural Director for Glamorgan to get a nine o'clock curfew imposed on members of the Women's Land Army in training at Tregoes to prevent them going out with soldiers, and by asking the MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE to discourage any such restrictions. Sir REGINALD DORMAN-SMITH replied that Press reports had probably been misleading and that no general regulations of the kind were contemplated. But there is no time like war, as the last one showed, for childish restrictions on the liberties of adults, and it is important that they should be fought from the beginning.

Sir REGINALD had good news not only for Glamorgan but for every agricultural district. He announced that the whole of next year's staple crops would be bought by the Government, so that farmers now have a market and prices guaranteed for their chief products. Prices will be fixed according to circumstances.

In answer to Mr. DENMAN, who asked what arrangements had been made for planning the economics of the nation and of the Allies, Mr. CHAMBERLAIN told the House that a new Committee had been set up for the first purpose, under the chairmanship of Sir JOHN SIMON with Lord STAMP as Adviser. Discussions on joint economic problems had already taken place with the French, and the means for joint action were being considered.

On the Adjournment, Mr. D. O. EVANS raised the question of the working of the official scheme for the insurance of commodities against war risks, and begged for the reduction of premiums. Mr. STANLEY replied that

these had been fixed at their present level on the assumption that raids might cause serious damage; if and when reliable data showed otherwise, then the premiums would certainly be

occurred during the various stages of manufacture. But a new Bill was dealing with the point.

Tuesday, October 10th.—Their Lordships met uneventfully for three minutes.

With a mild word here about sugar and a mild word there about income-tax, the Finance Bill got its Third Reading. A repellent but necessary monster, not to be thought about too much.

Much more cheering was the AIR MINISTER's account of what our Air Force had done in the first month of war. After reminding the House of the strain under which the Fighter Command lived, waiting and keyed up for instant action, he told it that in the first four weeks the Coastal Command had flown a million miles and escorted over a hundred convoys. With the Naval Air Arm they had sighted enemy submarines on seventy-two occasions and attacked them thirty-four times. Some of these attacks had been undoubtedly successful. A complete map of the Siegfried Line had been made from photographs taken by machines of the Bomber Command, and numerous flights had been made over Germany, often leading to valuable observations, without serious interference from native machines; though in spite of the German Bulletin's announcement that the citizens of Berlin had slept while British pamphlets showered down, our pilots reported gunfire and searchlights. Both men and women recruits had come forward voluntarily in large numbers. Our latest fighters were definitely better than those of the Germans. Production was shooting up to a figure which would be twice the present vast figure, and all the time we were working in full co-operation with France.

Finally, Sir KINGSLEY WOOD made the very important announcement that arrangements had been made for pilots and machines to be turned out in large numbers by Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and that Canada was to develop a special school for advanced training.

If the German Air Force will kindly look up Canada on the map, it will see something unpleasantly to its disadvantage.

Wednesday, October 11th.—After Lord COBHAM had explained to Lord STRABOLGI that even the works of Mr. P. G. WODEHOUSE could be cunningly doctored (what sacrilege!) so as to take valuable information out of the country, the Lords had a brief but



Soothsayer (Sir Kingsley Wood).

"I saw Jove's bird, the Imperial Eagle, wing'd
From the sunny South to this part of the West,
... which portends
Success to all our host."

Cymbeline (Revised Edition).

reduced. The total premium should never be more than six per cent. and he admitted that profiteering had



Napoleon B. Hore-Belisha asserts that in the knapsack of every soldier there is at least one potential star.



"As a matter of fact we found him in a crate of bananas."

outspoken debate about the scandal of commandeered hotels.

The Commons returned to the Ministry of Information, Mr. GREENWOOD describing it as partly leaflet-factory, partly landlady for letting furnished rooms, and partly a district messenger-boy for the Service Offices. He asked that a Minister should be personally responsible for Press, Radio and Films. Major ASTOR praised Lord MACMILLAN and Lord CAMROSE for what they had achieved in the way of order, and Sir SAMUEL HOARE declared that B.B.C. programmes were in the act of becoming brighter.

But the real interest of the day lay in Mr. HORE-BELISHA's admirable statement during Questions about the brilliant transportation of the B.E.F. to France. A few officers at the War Office, he said, working with seven confidential clerks and typists, had made a plan which would have baffled Bradshaw and which had made possible the shipment of 158,000 men in five weeks without a casualty. In 1914 148,000 men had gone to France in six

weeks, but they had taken only 800 vehicles as against the 25,000 which had already gone across the Channel. He spoke warmly of the help given by the French, and explained that while General GAMELIN was in supreme command, Lord GORT had a right of appeal, unlikely to be exercised, to the British Government.

Our plan for mobilising 32 divisions was not the limit of our effort. As each class was taken, a number of volunteers would be allowed to join up. Nearly all commissions were to be given from the ranks, Home Defence Battalions were to be formed and also an Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps. In answer to Questions, Mr. HORE-BELISHA announced that the two Corps Commanders already in France were Lt.-Gen. Sir JOHN DILL and Lt.-Gen. ALAN BROOKE.

Thursday, October 12th.—In similar terms HITLER got his answer in both Houses this afternoon, in the Lords from Lord STANHOPE and in the Commons from Mr. CHAMBERLAIN. They made it quite clear that a sudden

ache for humanity on the part of a murderer still sitting on the corpse of his victim was too suspect to be taken as the basis of a general settlement.

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN reminded the world, which was in fact his audience, of how this country had done its best to encourage a peaceful solution of the Polish problem, and of how wantonly and stupidly the German Chancellor had sacrificed life in this latest of his long series of crazy international crimes. The proposals he had made for peace seemed to imply recognition of his conquests, and it would be impossible for Great Britain to accept such a basis "without forfeiting her honour and abandoning her claim that international disputes should be settled by discussion and not by force." Moreover the word of the present German Government was no longer of value. We were in the war neither for revenge nor for material gain; it would go on unless the German Government gave convincing proof of their sincerity. The choice lay with Germany.

The House enthusiastically agreed.

Ah, the English!

STILL, even after making every allowance for the Government, one does feel rather aggrieved."

"I'm so sorry, Uncle William."

"After all, they really ought to do rather more than send one a form to fill up. But there it is—this unhappy country has fallen into the hands of the bureaucrats, and it's nothing but delay and muddle, muddle and delay."

"Oh, dear!"

"You may well say 'Oh, dear!' It's been the same thing over and over again all through history. The services of experienced men are dispensed with, and what's the result? Chaos—neither more nor less."

"Do you really think it's as bad as that, Uncle William?"

"Worse, my dear, worse. If anything, I've understated the case. Look at the Cabinet. What have we got in the Cabinet? Positively, I shouldn't care to say. I can't bring myself to tell you what I think of the present Cabinet. But this much I will say: It's exactly the same as what I thought about the last Cabinet, and the one before that, and the one before that again."

"Then I'm afraid, Uncle William, you haven't very much confidence in it."

"None whatever, my dear—none whatever. I hope I'm not actuated by personal considerations—in fact I'm certain I'm not—but one can only wring one's hands over a War Office that declines to utilise the services that are offered it."

"Was it—did they—was your application actually refused?"

"It's tantamount to being refused when one's asked to fill up some confounded form, which is probably going to be filed by a junior clerk and never looked at again. They did, I'm bound to say, put in a ridiculous letter expressing appreciation of my offer, but what does that mean, pray?"

"Still, it was better than nothing."

"Not at all. I should greatly have preferred nothing. I don't want appreciation: I want to be actively employed in the service of this dam' inefficient country."

"What did you suggest doing, Uncle William?"

"Naturally, as an old soldier, I suggested going straight to the Front—but failing that, I offered to do any full-time job that was wanted, in any part of the world. Good gad, I should have thought there was enough to be

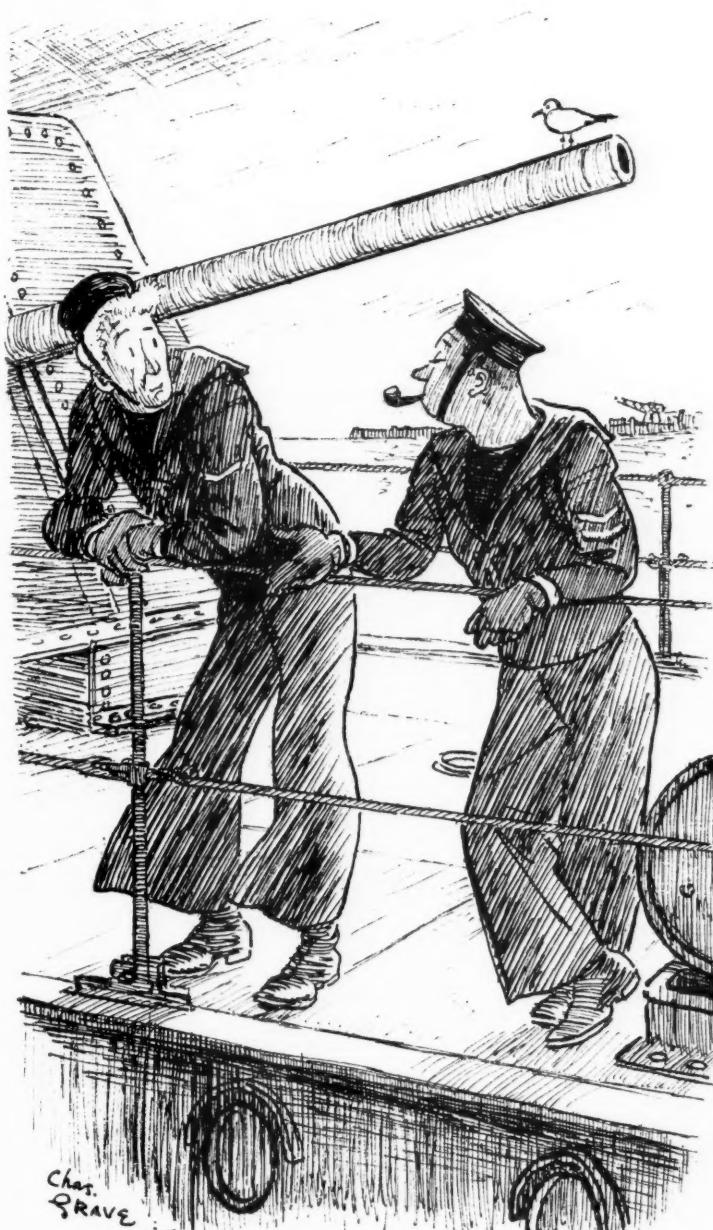
done! I gave them all my qualifications, such as they are, and every possible particular."

"Even your age, Uncle William?"

"What the devil has my age got to do with it? You know as well as I do

that I could pass for ten years younger than I am; so naturally I said I wasn't a day over seventy-one. I don't know what's the matter with them—unless they've got some prejudice against me."

E. M. D.



"After all, what's a thousand million quid?"

At the Play

"MUSIC AT NIGHT" (WESTMINSTER)

SIX weeks of play-starvation have perhaps been a very healthy thing.

I hate first-nights, because commonly the audience is more anxious to have its features registered by the society papers than to allow the curtain to be rung up, behind which a nerve-racked cast has had to wait for half an hour beyond the time billed for starting. The atmosphere is insincere and uncritical, and beside these well-advertised pillars of the drama, who may be seen in the foyer turning their noses now to the south and now to the north-east while the shutters click and the flashlights fizz, the audience on a second or third night presents a welcome intelligence and punctuality.

But this, London's first serious opening of the war, was quite different. Gripping gas-masks and torches, and mostly clad in day clothes, the audience surged under the dim blue bulbs in the hall and swept hungrily on into its seats as if the play was all that mattered and there was not a moment to be wasted in getting at it.

Mr. PRIESTLEY's experiment would have justified such excitement at any time.

What is important about it is that it represents a determined effort to break away from the current conventions of the theatre and dramatise the causes of human behaviour from a fresh angle. His aim here is to dig progressively deeper below the ordinary consciousness of his characters and to expose the various strata as he comes on them. If it is not to grow too dull and scientific such a process calls for relief, expertly applied, and to this end Mr. PRIESTLEY uses verse and heightened speech and a great variety of lighting. Where the play falls shortest is during its abrupt transitions from one state of consciousness to another, when the patients on whom Mr. PRIESTLEY is so deftly operating (under the anaesthetic of music) appear suddenly and unintentionally funny.

Mrs. Amesbury (Miss JEAN CADELL) is one of those rich ladies who collect embryonic lions and launch them, with plenty of drink for the Press. *David Shiel* (Mr. ROBERT HARRIS) is her latest acquisition, and in her studio at Hampstead she gives a party at which his new concerto can be heard. There come his wife, *Katherine* (Miss CATHERINE LACEY); his violinist, *Lengel* (Mr. STEPHEN MURRAY), a gloomy refugee; his ex-mistress, *Lady Sybil Linchester* (Miss LYDIA SHERWOOD), and her current lover, *Sir James Dirnie* (Mr. MILTON ROSMER), a tough industrial magnate; *Charles Bendrex*

frigid atmosphere of *Mrs. Amesbury's* party.

The next tour by the spotlight, after the music has again begun, releases a stream of subconscious thought on a general note of despair, and then Mr. PRIESTLEY strips off yet another layer from his patients' minds and gives them comprehension of why and how they have become what they are. To do this he lets them not only talk together but be visited by the dead. *Lady Sybil* and *Sir James*, for instance, discuss their relationship for the first time quite honestly, and the sudden appearance of the man whom *Sir James* had sacrificed long ago for his career shows him why enjoyment, though so easily bought, means so little to him. The older members of the party mourn lost ideals, the younger are bitterly perplexed at being so cruelly helpless to do anything about ideals still with them. Perhaps, says *Bendrex*, who is in the act of departing to his Eternal Constituency, pain is the key to everything, pain for the sake of pain; but then, lit more rosily, comes a revelation in which it is intimated to the party that to be a willing atom in the great cycle of birth and death gives a sufficient reason and compensation to man.

I think the piece should have ended with the music when *Mrs. Amesbury's* party returned to normal; the by-play, over a straw-hat, between the defunct politician and his ancestral and much dearer valet added nothing to it. But in spite of faults due mainly to its laudably bold design it is most interesting and at times moving.

The acting is so uniformly good that any special mention would be unfair; but for that reason Mr. MICHAEL MACOWAN must be congratulated on his production.

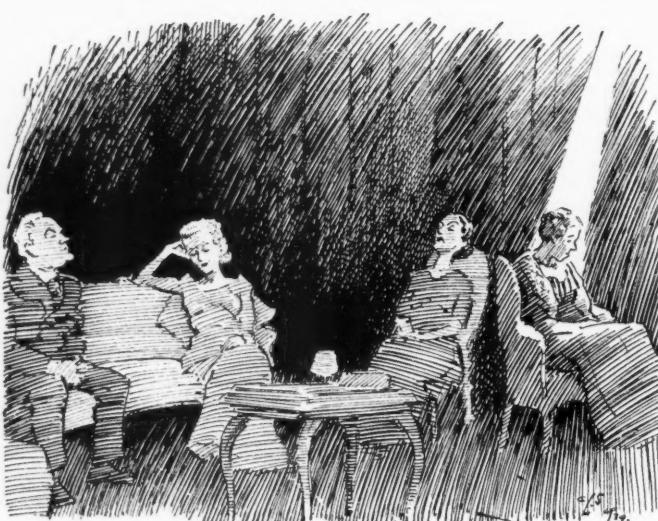
ERIC.

Fashion Note

"The equipment, in both cases, will have been bought at an ironmonger's shop at a total cost of a shilling or two.

The man, for example, will wear only sixpenny sun-glasses and a trilby hat."

Newcastle Paper.



EFFICIENT BLACK-OUT IN HAMPSTEAD

<i>Sir James Dirnie</i>	MR. MILTON ROSMER
<i>Lady Sybil Linchester</i>	MISS LYDIA SHERWOOD
<i>Katherine Shiel</i>	MISS CATHERINE LACEY
<i>Mrs. Amesbury</i>	MISS JEAN CADELL

(Mr. MARK DIGNAM), a Cabinet Minister in whom life is not quite extinct; *Philip Chilham* (Mr. RICHARD LITTLEDALE), an ace gossip-cad; *Peter Horlett* (Mr. MICHAEL DENISON), a rising left-wing poet, and *Anne* (Miss JENNY LAIRD), a nice child just grown up.

They gather politely, the apprehension and reverence so often to be seen at musical parties tensely mingled in their faces. The music starts. The lights go down, and immediately *Mrs. Amesbury*, with a spotlight on her, begins to speak her thoughts. These are the normal thoughts of a hostess, and the spotlight soon passes on to make a complete round of the guests and introduce them to us as people. At the end of the Act the music, which has become dimly audible again, stops and we are back in the somewhat



"I can't move on—I've used up all my units."

I've Finished My Blackout

The Song of the Triumphant Housewife

IVE finished my Black-out.

There's paint on the carpet and glue in my hair,
There's a saw in the bathroom and spills on the stair,
And a drawing-pin lost in the seat of the chair,
But I've finished my Black-out.

I've covered Cook's skylight with heavy blue paint
(She began it herself, but she came over faint),
And it may wash off after the war, and it mayn't;
But I've finished my Black-out.

The bedrooms are draped with funereal black
Except for the little one facing the back,
And that we have had to nail up with a sack,
But I've finished my Black-out.

The scheme of the bathroom accords very ill
With the sombre brown paper attached to the sill,
And there's no light to shave in the mornings—but still,
I've finished my Black-out.

The kitchen's fixed up with a very old blind,
A thing that the tenants before left behind,
And the spring doesn't work it at all. Never mind,
I've finished my Black-out.

Aunt Lucy's old mantle has come in at last.
It is nailed to the dining-room paint hard and fast,
Exhaling an odour of moths and the past,
But I've finished my Black-out.

And as for the drawing-room, my joy and my pride,
There's a blanket in front and a shawl at the side,
And the lovely new curtains have gone to be dyed.
Yes, I've finished my Black-out.

Oh, I've finished my Black-out.
Policemen and wardens may peer and may pry
And enemy planes may look down from the sky,
But they won't see a PIN-PRICK, however they try,
For I've finished my Black-out.



"I reckon 'e's darn lucky with that there pitch of 'is, don't you, Ted?"

Cross-Country

*"... Full of care
We have no time to stand and stare."*

I HAD always thought that once the difficulties of flying at all had been mitigated by experience, to fly from one place to another would be rather fun. I had thought that the earth, seen from the air, would be beautiful and interesting, that the cloud effects would stir my imagination, that, in short, I should feel ennobled and carefree. Now, however, that I

am actually about to embark on a journey I realise that I shall be about as carefree as Atlas supporting the heavens.

Already I have spent a harassing half hour in the Navigation Office. I have taken the bearing of my destination on the map with my protractor. I have made allowances for Magnetic Variation and Drift. I have calculated my ground-speed and I have estimated the times at which I should arrive at my destination and pass over the two

conspicuous landmarks on my route. And now, with my map in a pocket on my left shin, my helmet on my head, my goggles over my eyes, and a bearing of three hundred and eight degrees set on my compass I sit strapped into my cockpit ready to start.

But instead of feeling exhilarated I am already weighed down by anxiety. The process of getting on to the right course is beset with pitfalls. No point of the compass is free of them, and if I avoid the Scylla of Northerly and Southerly Turning Error I shall probably plunge into the Charybdis of Acceleration and Deceleration Error which applies to the directions east and west. I take off. I circle the aerodrome. I turn cautiously towards the northwest. I underestimate the Turning Error and turn too far. I correct the turn. As I pass over the aerodrome I suddenly remember that I must look at my watch. It says eighteen minutes to twelve. As the journey is calculated to take twenty-five minutes at an air-speed of ninety-six miles an hour I should arrive at—let's see, eighteen from twenty-five is seven—seven minutes past twelve. But *am* I flying at ninety-six miles an hour? I look at my air-speed indicator. No, I am not. I adjust the throttle.

I fly on. About now, if I am on the right course—I glance at the compass—I should be passing a little east of a railway junction. I peer over the side of the aeroplane. From the pattern of houses, roads and gardens below me I eventually pick out the railway line. There's the station and—yes, there's the junction just where it ought to be. Much relieved, I fly clear of the town and see before me an endless vista of little fields and woods all looking exactly alike and quite unlike the countryside which I had studied carefully on my map. Feeling considerably less reassured, I turn back to my instrument board and find with a shock that I am not only gaining height but that the compass needle is about ten degrees to the right of where it ought to be. I get the aeroplane level and then strive to remember the rule for getting back on to the course. "Imagine," I repeat to myself, "that you are standing on the compass needle at the north end facing south." Let's see. The needle is pointing away from me and rather to the right, so if I were standing on the north end of it I should be looking towards myself but a bit to the left, and my right hand would be—oh, lord! Let's try turning a bit to the left. I do so and it happens to be correct.

I now have leisure to look at my watch and I find that owing to my

other preoccupations I have missed my first landmark altogether. The aerodrome from which I started is out of sight and the country below me seems as featureless as the ocean. I begin to be afraid that I am lost and a chill creeps about my heart. My second landmark is a curious-shaped wood which, on the map, looked very conspicuous. I should pass to the left of it in about five minutes and I decide to look at my map so as to be sure of recognising it. I fish the map out of my pocket with my left hand and try to open it without moving my right hand, which is on the stick, or my feet, which are on the rudder bars. My cockpit is very narrow, and as I struggle with the map the wind catches it and I only just succeed in keeping it from being blown out of the aeroplane. It flaps about distractingly, all the paper-fasteners which were to have kept it flat fly off and by the time I have found my wood and stuffed the map back into my pocket I am well off my course again and diving steeply towards the ground. I get back on to my course and peer apprehensively over the side for my wood. There are dozens of woods. The whole countryside seems to be dotted with them and I cannot definitely recognise any of them as the one I want.

Resigning myself to despair I fly on. Twelve o'clock comes and there is no sign of my destination. I am now certain that I am lost and I begin to toy dismally with the thought of landing in a field to ask where I am. But at five minutes past twelve I see in the distance a green field which seems larger than the other green fields. A faint hope springs up in me. The green field becomes more sharply defined, and as I look at it a little hangar appears on one side of it. As I approach nearer I also descry with joy a tiny wind-sock, and at eight minutes past twelve I pass over the white circle within which is written the name of my destination. Bursting with pride and relief I land. I have a ginger beer. Were it not for the thought of the return journey I should be completely happy.

Popularity

"YOU seem," said Edith, "to be much more popular in the village than you used to be. I can't make it out at all."

"People are at last becoming awake," I suggested, "to those sterling qualities in me which are so much more valuable

than mere flashy shop-window talents. A man like Johnson-Clitheroe, for instance, gets quickly popular in a new place because he can produce rabbits from hats at children's parties. But gradually it sinks into people's minds that life has a fuller and deeper meaning, and does not consist entirely in taking rabbits out of hats."

Actually, not having been into the village for some days, as I was nursing a sprained wrist, I had not been aware of any access of popularity. However, as I needed some tobacco I thought I might as well go down and see for myself.

As I passed the Vicarage the Vicar came out on his way to post a letter.

"My dear Conkleshill," he said, "I'm so delighted to see you about again. I have just been reading your new novel and I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed it. And how is the wrist?"

I told him that it was likely to be rather a long time before it was quite right again, and then I thought he was going to say something else, but he hesitated and then added that perhaps he would pop in during the afternoon.

Johnson-Clitheroe was leaning over his garden gate as I went by.

"That new novel of yours," he said, "is a masterpiece. I stayed up nearly all night reading it. How's the wrist?"

"I'm afraid it's going to be a long job," I said. Johnson-Clitheroe paused for a few minutes and then said that he would look in and see me in the

evening, as he knew there was something he wanted to speak to me about but he couldn't quite recollect what it was.

Skinner, the tobacconist, welcomed me with a beaming smile.

"I can let you have a couple of ounces of the usual at the old price," he said, speaking in a conspiratorial whisper. "It is supposed to have gone up of course, but we mustn't be hard on our old customers. How is the wrist?"

I began to think that there must be something very pathetic about a sprained wrist. I broke a leg in 1932 and an arm in 1937, and I was crippled with neuritis for a month in the autumn of 1938, but nobody seemed in the least interested. Evidently it took a sprained wrist to bring out the best feelings of my neighbours.

I dropped into the "Black Boar" for a quiet half-pint, and the landlord said that it was about time I had one on the house and pushed my money back to me. He was just sympathising with me about my having to lift the tankard with my left hand when Colonel Hogg came in.

Colonel Hogg has his faults, but he is not a man to beat about the bush. No false feeling of delicacy held him back as it had held back the others. He came straight to the point.

"You won't be able to use your car with that sprained wrist of yours," he said—"what about letting me have your petrol ration until you need it again?"



Unity of Purpose

Letters from a Gunner

XVI

MY DEAR MOTHER,—There is one phrase from my classical(?) education that now wings itself into my thoughts with a clarity that would surprise my late classics master very considerably. It is "Cæsar then went into winter quarters." Probably I do not quote "De Bello Gallico" accurately; but then I never could, even when I had done my prep. But that was the general sense of the passage, and it is only now that I am beginning to realise the essential genius of Cæsar. Not only did he go into winter quarters; he did not indulge in winter campaigns.

Not that we are actually indulging in winter campaigns. We are not indulging in any campaigns at all. The September moon has come and gone and still no shell-burst has stained the evening sky (rather neat that, don't

you think?). Apart from the balloon barrage, which has twice been identified as heavy but soundless gun-bursts in the . . . (censored) sky, nothing of human origin obscured the glory of the stars. One says at supper, in that kind of mock-hearty way we use to conceal our more blameworthy emotions such as affection or fear, "Pretty good night for a raid," and everyone agrees and hastily changes the subject. But the raids, they come not.

To be truthful, all the winter quarters have come not either. We possess a number of sections of huts—enough sections, one feels, to supply all our needs if only we were allowed to treat them as meccano parts and use our ingenuity. All over the position one comes across rows of short stakes, already embedded in the ground, intended as the foundations of the

aforesaid huts. They look rather like Tank traps at the moment and are a prolific cause of blasphemy and distress as various ranks from time to time fall over them. But some day they will support the huts we are going to have.

Then we have a number of roofs. They are of no immediate use, but it is both logical and comforting to argue that we would not have these roofs if they did not intend ultimately to supply walls to go with them. And windows. One cannot, in these blacked-out days, live in a hut consisting entirely of supporting stakes, roofs and windows. We have told the Royal Engineers about this, but either they think it some perverted whim of a thoroughly bourgeois battery or they are using double walls in their own elegant huts for the sake of the



"I suppose now that you boys are all mechanised, the distance to Tipperary is nothing to make a noise about."



"I don't know how you feel about it, Colonel, but I'm beginning to lose faith in Hitler."

resulting warmth, and further supplies are not "to hand."

We have one dreadful fear. That is that we have forfeited the goodwill of the R.E. Fuehrer, or whatever he is called. He visited us one evening as dusk was falling, and unfortunately was not expected. The guard, very properly, regarded him as a potential spy. It is difficult to believe that an enemy agent would have the effrontery to assume the disguise of a major in the Royal Engineers, but one should never underrate one's opponents. So he went in the guard tent and stayed there until his headquarters identified him. It was not our fault that they all seemed to be at supper when we telephoned. He said a good deal about that.

Then he fell in a trench. Again it was not our fault it was full of water. We did offer him a change of under-wear. Most ominously he was quite silent, save for a subdued chattering of teeth.

Our dread now is that his minions will appear and say "Not only will you be deprived of all hope of further huts, we shall take away even those which

you hath." It's the kind of thing that happened to Job, and I have always felt that Job was the real ancestor of the twentieth-century citizen.

Still, we still have some huts. And, as our Viennese friend used to say, while we are in them we must sleep very fast.

There are two other minor disasters to report. First, the Powers that Be have taken away the "T" from our shoulders. We thought, happily, that since recruiting for the T.A. had ceased we should gradually become a select class of distinguished patriots, easily identifiable as those who saved our country in 1938 as well as in 1939. Men, even girls, would turn round as we passed and say with bated breath, "Look, that man was a *volunteer!*" Alas for these idle dreams! Now we just look like anything else out of the Army Class. We might even have been Militia. However, I have managed to tear my shoulder-straps so badly when removing the "T" that at least the cognoscenti will be able to identify me for what I am—or was.

The other disaster is the Divisional Order that we are not permitted while

on leave to proceed to Eire without special permission. Since so far leave is limited to periods of forty-eight hours, the point is rather academic. But I hate these restrictions. Actually, if I had sufficient leave and could get the necessary warrant, I did intend to run over to New York to see the World's Fair. As it is, now I cannot even go to Dublin and see a lighted street lamp.

Speaking of leave, I hope to have forty-eight hours soon. When I am home and you bring me my breakfast in bed, could you have a major's uniform to wear when doing so? Or even that of a sergeant in the A.T.S.? Or is that slightly *risqué*?

Your loving Son,
HAROLD.

P.S.—If you see any M.P.s about ask them why we have not been paid.

• •

Impending Apology

"Those who have not previously met him consider him extremely pleasant."

Irish Paper.



"O. K., then, your Grace. 'Allotment Holder's Weekly' instead of 'Croquet Gazette' as from Monday."

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

Comrade Stalin

THERE is no denying that the first half of M. BORIS SOUVARINE's critical biography of *Stalin* (SECKER AND WARBURG, 15/-) is hard going. The early history of "SOSO" DJUGASHVILI, peasant of Tiflis, seminarist, revolutionary, exile and obscure member of LENIN's *politbureau*, though not over easy to document, is comparatively plain sailing; but the parallel growth of Bolshevism is, perhaps inevitably, too widely ramified for clarity. Through this subterranean welter of intrigue and counter-intrigue "The Pockmarked," as Tsarist police called STALIN, moved at first unnoticed save for his remarkable lack of principle and his practical cunning. But with LENIN's death and deification STALIN's chance came. He substituted Leninism for Marxism, engineered a hostile ring round TROTSKY, and in five years of plots, purges, mass-murders and "suicides" realised by inches his *coup d'état*. On its personal side M. SOUVARINE's record is a fairly typical approach to dictatorship. The one-time subjects of the SFORZA revert to MUSSOLINI, the one-time victims of IVAN the Terrible to STALIN. In the political domain it is monumental; for Russia is the world's extremest instance of a primitive, almost brutish, caste endeavouring to exploit the resources and menaces of modern mechanical science.

Mary the Queen

It would hardly seem possible—short of the discovery of a new batch of Casket Letters—to import any particularly novel element into a Life of *Mary Queen of Scots* (ALLEN AND UNWIN, 12/6). But Miss M. P. WILLCOCKS—one feels it is probably "Mrs." or "Miss"—has given the great story a new lease of life, and this without any outstanding equipment of erudition or style. The means she employs are two, and while the first has its dangers the second is an outstanding success. She is an unabashed romantic, and her occasional want of tact in savouring a picturesquely situation can prove tiresome even to a sympathiser; but her almost Gallie skill in incorporating contemporary evidence would be the making of any biography. On the DARNLEY murder she is a partisan of the Queen—a disciple of General MAHON and Judge PARRY. Her story of the imprisonment in England—a neglected patch of history recently dealt with by JEANNE HENRI-BORDEAUX—is particularly good, as are her portraits of BOTHWELL and his womenfolk. But from first to last her lavish and sensitive use of the graphic detail of MARY's unfortunate dossier is a continual delight.

Titania's Daughter

A dozen writers—more, maybe—
Might pose within their novel's scene
A girl who really thought that she
Was daughter of the Fairy Queen;
But only one (or I'm deceived)
Could make the figure seem so true
That not the girl alone believed
But all her native village too.

That one is Lord DUNSANY. His
Story of Mona Sheehy shows
Such things as possibilities,
At least where Ireland's verdure blows;
Nor there alone, for he translates
His maid to London for a bit,
Though she indeed supremely hates
The very sight and sound of it.

And yet the tale (from HEINEMANN)
Is not a fantasy of fays,



"I shall ask to be evacuated back."



THEN

"LOOK, MOTHER—A SOLDIER!"

Frank Reynolds, October 18th, 1916

But something built upon the plan
 Of these material latter days—
 Built with the humour and the charm
 Which Lord DUNSANY's pen can bring
 To Ireland's folk of field and farm
 With ever-youthful burgeoning.

A Stern Soldier

It seems strange, in the present temper of England, to find ourselves called upon to admire a man who seriously advocated "the flaying alive, impaling or burning of the murderers of the women and children at Delhi," and expressed (rather inconsistently) the opinion that "when an Empire is at stake women and children cease to be of any consideration whatever." Yet with all his ruthlessness in word and deed, for his hand was as heavy as his pen was trenchant, JOHN NICHOLSON, *The Hero of Delhi* (COLLINS, 12/6), was undeniably of the heroic breed. He was not only a great soldier: his absolute integrity compels respect; and, in spite of his aloofness and taciturnity, his quickness to



NOW

"LOOK, MOTHER—A CIVILIAN!"

Frank Reynolds

quarrel and his intolerance of fools, he won both the admiration and the affection of wise men like HENRY LAWRENCE and HERBERT EDWARDES and brave men like HODSON and ROBERTS. As for the Sikhs, they deified him, and were undeterred from worship even though their god whipped them for their pains. Of this remarkable man Mr. HESKETH PEARSON has retold the story in a very readable narrative. What most appeals to him in NICHOLSON, after his courage and his generalship, would appear to be his habit of disobedience to those in authority. Mr. PEARSON has a fine contempt for brass-hats and red tape, and deals very disrespectfully with some exalted names. "Ordinary soldiers," he asserts, "like ordinary politicians, are useless in a crisis"; but he offers no recipe for the production at the psychological moment of a more effective alternative.

Mr. Coward Turns to Fiction.

Mr. NOEL COWARD's work in the theatre has shown him to be extremely observant of fact and foible but less interested by individual twists of character than by broad

trends of manners; in his first book of short stories, however—*To Step Aside* (HEINEMANN, 7/6)—it is the personal oddities of particular people with which he is mainly concerned. His keen appreciation of small detail is apparent in the way he presents them, and they have each a strength of their own which seems to spring from their being lit, as it were, from an unusual angle. Two of the stories are a good deal better than the rest. “The Kindness of Mrs. Radcliffe” is a satiric study of a suburban humbug in whom sadism is genteely wrapped up in layers of rectitude and public spirit and overwhelming kindness; how effectively and satisfactorily Mr. COWARD hates the woman! And “Aunt Tittie” is the record by a small boy, born disastrously in the Warsaw-Berlin express, of his upbringing abroad by an aunt with a declining career in cabaret and a zest for life of which certainly *Mrs. Radcliffe* would not have approved. There is much of the humour of *Red Peppers* in this story, and much that goes deeper. Of the others the best is “What Mad Pursuit?” a clever and amusing commentary on the more crushing sort of American hospitality. Mr. COWARD’s style is colloquial, but he uses words very lucidly and with economy. It is to be hoped that he will now give us a novel.

In the Storm King's Realm

This is a book to be read in a cosy room with a good fire, and a cold gale blowing past the windows. The author, HAKON MIELCHE, is a Danish traveller and writer who combines wanderlust with keen observation and a most amusingly ironical sense of humour. The title, *Journey to the World's End* (HODGE, 12/6), is quite apt, as the writer and an equally adventurous friend went to explore Cape Horn and all the desolate storm-swept regions of Southern Tierra del Fuego in a leaky twenty-five-foot cutter, tramped over mountains to the False Cape Horn, and lived as rough a life as any healthy man would care to endure. They must be genial souls, for they made no enemies but many friends among a queer population largely made up of the criminals, major and minor, of nearly all nations. The description of the annihilation of the thousands of indigenous natives by a white civilisation and the well-meaning but misguided missionaries is a masterpiece of delicate satire, as is also the author’s account of the reason why fur-bearing animals are being wiped out. There are good photographs, and the book is illustrated throughout with amusing and clever marginal sketches by the author.



“Well, someone’s got to be first off the mark with a novel about this war.”

whole-heartedly as he detested the beautiful and exquisite *Gerald Poyser*. This story is guaranteed to provide ample diversion for anyone whose brow is not too high.

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